

# ***‘GOING NATIVE’***

**Tourism, Negotiable Authenticity and Cultural Production in the  
Polynesian Cultural Center and Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the bustling centre of Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki, amongst the high fashion retail shops, beachfront hotels, and an eclectic mix of street performers, buses painted with the bright colours of the Polynesian Cultural Center promise the tourist a way to ‘Go Native!’ Stopping at each major hotel within this tourism capital of Hawaii, these buses pick up tourists eager to spend the day ‘experiencing all of Polynesia’ at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Across the Pacific, in the Australian tropics of North Queensland, visitors, replete with their adventure travel in the Great Barrier Reef, flock to the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park in search of their ‘indigenous experience.’ After a Skyrail ride above the treetops of the nearby Daintree National Rainforest, tourists disembark to ‘see Australia’s culture through [Aboriginal] eyes.’

The Polynesian Cultural Center and the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park are but two of many indigenous cultural centres that exist across the world that serve the tourism market. These two sites, strikingly similar in objective as well as for their tremendous commercial success, provide a fascinating platform from which to examine the potential of such ‘living museums’ for source communities. Though often derided by the constituents these sites purport to represent and criticized by some tourists for their staged, Disneyland-like qualities, these types of tourist cultural centres nevertheless continue to grow in size, scope, and popularity, collecting tourism awards along the way. What is it about these sites that garner such acclaim by some and distrust by others? If these centres indeed convey nothing more than crass commercialism and an edification of the dominant western (white) gaze over the marginalized (brown) indigenous body in a perverse form of cultural prostitution (see Tilley 1999; Nash 1977), why are indigenous communities and regional tourism bureaus alike increasingly adopting these centres as models for the indigenous tourism market? The aim of this paper is to reconcile these conflicting attitudes toward the tourist cultural centre and explore its potential as a contact zone between dominant (traveling) cultures and local indigenous communities. Can cultural centres marketed by and for the tourism industry function as meaningful sites to construct, negotiate, and transform contemporary indigenous identities, and in what ways? An examination of two case studies, the Polynesian Cultural Center in Laie,

Hawaii and the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park in Cairns, Australia, will highlight the complex issues that surround the representation of indigenous histories, cultures, and identities within the tourism market, and will allow us to gauge the role such centres play in creating notions of contemporary indigeneity.

This inquiry is intended to contribute to the burgeoning scholarship of tourism and its effects on source communities within the social sciences. Until the publication of Valene Smith's (1977) pioneering work *Hosts and Guests: An Anthropology of Tourism*, the study of tourism, globally and *en masse*, had largely remained ignored within anthropology and related disciplines. Within this volume, leading scholars began examining the 'nature of tourism and its effect on the structure of society' (Smith 1989: ix). Additionally, MacCannell (1973) and Graburn (1976), among others, began examining the ways in which indigenous communities engaged with tourism as a means to negotiate identities in an increasingly global market. Many of these anthropological investigations employ theories of objectification to examine indigenous involvement in tourism as 'spectacle' and 'staged performance' (MacCannell 1976). Often, these ethnographies take a critical stance on the impact of tourism on source communities, highlighting its capacity to 'invent' culture by changing the behaviour of the people 'whose authenticity is being sought' by those in 'search for the authentic' (Hutchins 2007: 81). It is the permanence suggested in these changes that concerns many anthropologists: in his study of the Maasai in Kenya, Bruner (2005) solicits the reader to 'contemplate the possibility that the Maasai will eventually become (rather than just appear as) the pop culture image of themselves... Where does Maasai culture begin and Hollywood image end?' (92).

Incorporating these theories of objectification, invention of tradition, and staged authenticity, a study of the tourist cultural centre is particularly timely, as tourism has rapidly become the largest industry in the world (Urry 2002: 3) and the Internet brings the world to tourists' fingertips before ever arriving at their destination. Ecotourism, more specifically, defined as 'a spectrum of nature-based activities that foster visitor appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural heritage and are managed to be ecologically, economically and socially sustainable' (Tourism Queensland, 5), is the

fastest growing industry within the tourism economy and provides a key means for indigenous communities to become economically viable participants in the tourism industry (20). However, as more source communities worldwide enter the tourism market by operating their own ecotourism businesses or serving advisory or management roles, so too are private (native and non-native) entrepreneurs and larger social interest groups turning to cultural centres that serve tourists in their area. If the global tourist market will soon be flooded with both profit-based and not-for-profit ventures that claim to present a monolithic ‘indigenous history and culture’ to (western) tourist audiences, scholarship of the potential of these sites to function in meaningful ways for marginalized, indigenous cultures is vital in creating and sustaining industry standards that encourage and inspire native involvement, through consultation, collaboration, or co-ownership. The absence of significant scholarship of tourism within anthropology can only perpetuate essentialized stereotypes and representations of complex indigenous cultures.

## METHODOLOGY

The Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) in Hawaii and the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park (Tjapukai) in Australia were selected for this study for a variety of reasons. Both sites serve similar functions: that is, to educate and entertain primarily western (European and American) tourist audiences with both broad and more localized notions of ‘native culture’ through interactive displays, activities and dance performances. Both sites are located near major tourism centres—Waikiki in Honolulu, Hawaii<sup>1</sup> and Cairns, North Queensland, Australia,<sup>2</sup> respectively—and require indigenous involvement, whether as performers, collaborators, or board members. Additionally, as the brief period within which to complete this dissertation precluded extensive fieldwork, I ultimately selected these two sites as a result of my exposure to both locations through previous projects.

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<sup>1</sup> See Map 1 in Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See Map 2 in Appendix.

I first became familiar with the Polynesian Cultural Center on my first trip to Waikiki in October 2006, where I attended the Hawaii International Film Festival for a film on which I had worked examining Hawaii's only all-male hula school and its *kumu hula* Robert Cazimero, a fixture in Hawaii's cultural renaissance in the 1970s. In this capacity, I arrived in Waikiki as a hybrid scholar-tourist, experiencing Oahu as a destination for the first time, with the self-awareness of a scholar-anthropologist with previous knowledge of and contacts within local cultural movements in the area. I watched with fascination at the hordes of camera-toting tourists, who appeared as eager to capture the latest surf merchandise on Waikiki's high street as they were 'real Hawaiian' culture. Buses bedecked in elaborate advertisements for the Polynesian Cultural Center passed frequently, picking up tourists to transport them to their location about an hour's drive outside Waikiki. On a later road trip, I passed PCC but never entered, though I certainly witnessed its proximity to Brigham Young University-Hawaii's campus, a seemingly minor detail at the time that would only become more fully illuminated during my research for this paper.

Similarly, my exposure to Tjapukai resulted from my involvement in an ethnographic film and research project I conducted on dance and tourism amongst the nearby Kuku Yalanji of the Daintree Rainforest in 2002. One of my contacts brought me to Tjapukai in order to contrast the more grassroots level of Kuku Yalanji performance to the more commercialized venture of the Djabugay peoples.<sup>3</sup> My contact was related to many of the performers, and I conducted informal interviews with some of them during my visit at the park. Some of my discussion of the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park is based on these informal interviews, though I recognize the limitations of relying on conversations that occurred five years ago. However, the reactions recorded during these interviews reflect larger discussions presented in the larger body of scholarship consulted for this paper, and thus remain useful for the purpose of this study.

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<sup>3</sup> Though pronounced the same way and once used interchangeably, spellings *Tjapukai* and *Djabugay* today serve different functions within the community. *Djabugay* is the preferred spelling to refer to the traditional owners of the area, while *Tjapukai*, in contrast, is used to signify the cultural park itself (see Henry 2000: 326). This is an important distinction and one I will employ in this paper.

Supplementing my admittedly limited ethnographic exposure to these areas is extensive cultural evidence collected through case studies and fieldwork presented by other scholars at these sites. In PCC's case, I rely most strongly on Jane Desmond's (1999) work on hula and surf culture in Waikiki, as well as ethnographies conducted by Balme (1998), Stanton (1998), Webb (1994) and Ross (1994). While limited ethnographic analysis is available on Tjapukai, I draw primarily from Rosita Henry's (2000) performance ethnography of the site as well as data collected by Cave, Ryan and Panakera (2003) in their analysis of reactions to a proposed Pacific Island cultural centre in New Zealand.

Finally, and perhaps most powerfully, I also draw upon both PCC's and Tjapukai's extensive presentations of their respective locations on the Internet; both centres provide extraordinary multimedia web presence. I consulted their press releases and lengthy written presentations of their organizations, considered for my purposes not as expository statements on these centres but as marketing materials explicitly designed to contribute to and promote the tourist's experience. I also made use of the digital media-sharing site YouTube.com in collecting my ethnographic research, and found remarkable footage of performances and activities at both sites, as well as some provocative comments left behind by viewers of the material. These comments, as well as the footage itself, were very useful in both providing visual evidence of the activities that occur at PCC and Tjapukai, as well as in determining potential reactions to these sites.

From a theoretical perspective, this paper takes a cross-disciplinary approach, examining these centres not only through broader theories of tourism and a growing body of ecotourism literature within sociology and anthropology, but also through the lens of museum studies and representations, performance studies and theories of the body. As cultural centres that serve the tourist market lie within the juncture between these different, but related fields, I draw upon such diverse sources as theories of consumption and the tourist gaze (Urry 1990, 1995; Rojek and Urry 1997); theories of body politics, spectatorship and performance (Desmond 1997, 1999; Reed 1998); and issues of salvage ethnography and museum representations (Hill 2000; Said 1978, Clifford 1997). As a

site where indigenous culture is defined and communicated through exhibits, hands-on activities and dance performances, and ‘authentic reproductions’ (Bruner 1994) exist to evoke nostalgia for a precolonial past, these tourist cultural centres demand such cross-disciplinary approaches in order to best examine their complexity.

## **THEORIES OF TOURISM WITHIN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

In order to better understand the relationship between tourists and cultural centres like PCC and Tjapukai, it is vital to understand the roots of travel and tourism within western (Euro-American) society. Traditionally, the study of tourism within the social sciences has been marginalized, in part due to the negative aspects associated with tourism as well as the parallels tourism shares with anthropological fieldwork (Tilley 1999). If participant-observation fieldwork, conducted by trained social scientists over a lengthy period of time as a mode of data collection for anthropological analysis rests at one end of a continuum, tourism lies at the other. Though each group might share a natural curiosity for cultures outside their own, tourists are derided ‘for being satisfied with superficial experiences of other people and other places’ (MacCannell 1976: 10) whereas the anthropologist is not. Despite what appears to be clear distinctions between the two, there is enough grey area along this continuum to render the anthropology of tourism—and, more specifically, ethnographies of tourist sites—a precarious subject at best within the larger discipline. Indeed, Ross suggests, ‘Anthropologists’ temporary stay of residence in foreign cultures, with superior means, limited access, and varying degrees of interpretive competence barely distinguishes them from that of the independent tourist’ (1994: 42). However, sociologists like Dean MacCannell (1973, 1976, 1992) and John Urry (1990, 1995) have begun examining the social motivations within western culture for leisure travel and tourism and developed theories that continue to inform anthropological investigations of tourism today.

Prior to discussing these theories of tourism, it is prudent to define the type of tourism these scholars discuss. Generally speaking, ‘travel’ refers primarily to individual movement from one place to another; ‘tourism,’ conversely, refers to groups of people who move *en masse* together (see Urry 2002). Within ‘tourism’ lies a large diversity of



travelers: ranging from those who prefer to travel 'off the beaten path' to the mass tourists who expect western amenities and remain largely isolated from local daily life (see Cohen 1972, 1979, 1988). While a great variety of these different types of tourists visit both PCC and Tjapukai, the primary tourist population to which this discussion refers is the mass tourist.

One of the most debated theories of tourism is the impetus for travel itself. Tourism, according to Nelson Graburn (1977), becomes a respite for those 'modern,' western individuals trapped in the drudgery of daily life. Adopting Leach's (1961) theory of time being marked by cycles of normal-profane (the tourist's everyday work world) and abnormal-sacred (holidaymaking), Graburn argues that tourism becomes the primary means by which western individuals insert meaning into their lives, as 'each meaningful event marks the passage of time and thus life itself' (26). Similarly, Urry (2002) situates tourist sites in a binary opposition between the ordinary lives of the tourist and the extraordinary, that which is experienced outside the realm of one's everyday existence (see also Rojek & Urry 1997: 52). To Urry, tourism is about 'departure', 'a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane' (2). Essentially, creating, experiencing and gazing upon difference is the whole point of tourism. It is the quest for difference, a break from routine that compels the western individual to travel; in seeking new sites, experiences and realities, the tourist can demarcate time and distract himself from the mundanities of everyday life.

Integral to this process of creating meaning through departure is, according to MacCannell (1976), what the tourist seeks to find while on the journey. Upon their departure, tourists embark on a pilgrimage in search of authenticity. As modernization is inherently unstable and inauthentic, tourists attempt to locate it elsewhere: namely, 'in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles' (3). Tourism becomes, rather than simply a means to organize and mark time, a pseudo-religious experience, meant to achieve and realize the 'sacred' (see also Urry 2002: 9). This 'sacred' can be found in all variety of locations: from the 'natural,' unmarked sites which have not undergone any intervention, to the 'contrived,' those sites wholly artificial in

character and created for tourists (Cohen 1995: 15). The importance instead lies in the ability of those sites to confirm previously held beliefs of difference and authenticity for the tourists that visit them. This quest for authenticity, however, has important implications; MacCannell cautions that

the concern of moderns for “naturalness,” their nostalgia and their search for authenticity are not merely casual and somewhat decadent, though harmless, attachments to the souvenirs of destroyed cultures and dead epochs. They are also components of the conquering spirit of modernity—the grounds of its unifying consciousness. [3]

In this sense, then, the modernized, western tourist is in search of an idealized, simpler time and culture, replete with authenticity, as a way to enact the dominance of modernization over the ‘authentic’ cultures of the world.

This encounter between the tourist and the subject of his gaze as a process of authentication amounts to what Nash (1977) deems a performed endorsement of the imperialism of western culture over others. In expanding the interests of one’s society abroad, Nash states, ‘These interests... are imposed on or adopted by an alien society, and evolving intersocietal transactions, marked by the ebb and flow of power, are established’ (38). A disparity of power is engaged with each transaction that occurs between western tourists and those peoples native to their destination site, whether such transactions are monetary, service-oriented, or otherwise. The implication is that western tourists, who can afford the luxury of time and money to experience a more ‘authentic’ time and place, require native assistance in order to bear the burden of their modernity. Classic colonial relationships of dominance and servility are enacted through the very process of tourism itself.

However, tourism and an imperialistic search for authenticity remain, ultimately, a transaction between two populations. While tourists may hope to discover ‘authentic culture,’ they rely upon natives to deliver it. This concept of authenticity within tourism, then, reveals important dynamics between these two groups that inform this discussion. A closer look at our two case studies, and its claims to authenticity, will highlight this dynamic between tourist and native in such cultural centres and allow us to more effectively determine how these theoretical processes work in practice.

## THE POLYNESIAN CULTURAL CENTER

The Polynesian Cultural Center, located on over forty acres in Laie and adjacent to the Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYUH) campus, was established in 1963 by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (commonly known as the Mormons). Initially created to house a small Polynesian dance troupe comprised of BYUH students, PCC is now home to seven 'island villages' that each represent a different Polynesian nation, a 2,800 seat amphitheatre that hosts the 'Horizons' nightly dance show, an IMAX theatre, a Migration Museum, and two large restaurants in addition to nightly luau venues. The park has become so vast that its administrators now offer a 'Free for Three' deal that allows visitors to enter the park up to three consecutive days to experience it all. From its meager beginnings grew what has become 'Hawaii's #1 Paid Attraction', with over one million visitors annually.<sup>4</sup>

While the vast array of offerings promises that no two visits to the PCC are alike, a typical day is structured so that visitors spend a majority of the day traveling from island to island to view or participate in hourly scheduled activities or presentations. Representing the seven largest Polynesian nations—Samoa, Fiji, Hawaii, Marquesas, Tahiti, Aotearoa (New Zealand Maori) and Tonga—each island hosts a 'traditional' island dwelling and is predominantly staffed by BYUH students dressed in the traditional costume of their village 'nation.' Some demonstrations at each island are tailored to the distinct cultural practices for which each nation is known, while others appear more 'generic' Polynesian: Maori 'art tattoo' at the Island of Aotearoa; hula instruction and *poi* sampling at the Island of Hawaii; cooking and fire-making at the Island of Samoa; 'hip-shaking dance' at the Island of Tahiti; a mock pig hunt at the Island of Marquesas; and so on. Visitors may take canoe rides along the lagoon that divides the park's landscape to travel between island villages. The atmosphere during the day is, according to Webb (1994)

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<sup>4</sup> The Polynesian Cultural Center is second only to the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor in number of annual visitors (Stanton 1989: 247).

simple and leisurely paced. They involve audience participation. The villagers are very accessible and mingle with the tourists, joking and chatting. Village programs use relatively few performers and take place during the day in the open air. [63]

Come evening, however, the presentations take a decidedly more theatrical turn. As the sun sets over the Pacific, visitors are directed to one of three luau venues across the park. Greeted with an orchid lei, visitors are ‘treated to an evening of traditional music, dance and the ritual of removing a well-roasted pig from the fire pit, or *imu*’ (PCC 2007b) that promises to deliver to its visitors ‘an experience you won’t find in Waikiki.’ After sampling such ‘native delicacies’ as *kalua* pork, taro rolls and *poi*, visitors then proceed to the Pacific Theater for the *Horizons* night show, an elaborate dance and light extravaganza featuring over one hundred performers, lavishly costumed, in a pre-recorded, choreographed stage production. Webb calls the two portions of the PCC—its island village activities during the day and its night performances—so distinct that ‘the center seems to be two separate attractions’ (Webb 1994: 63).

While an examination of the nightly *Horizons* show certainly offers substantial ethnographic material to discuss the identity politics of tourist performances, for purposes of this discussion I will be relying primarily on the activities that occur during the day in each island village. This is due, in part, to the more intimate setting of these daily performances. The staging of a large production necessarily precludes extensive audience participation, and it is in these interactions between the tourist and the ‘native’ that I am primarily interested. Additionally, as the following section demonstrates, the parallels PCC and Tjapukai share are most closely found in their daily interactive exhibits and presentations.

## **THE TJAPUKAI ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PARK**

Much like the Polynesian Cultural Center, the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park was inspired by the successes of an Australian Aboriginal dance troupe in nearby Kuranda, a tourist outpost located within the mountains of the Daintree National Rainforest. Opened in 1987 as the Tjapukai Dance Theatre in Kuranda and the first Aboriginal tourist attraction in Australia (Tjapukai 2007b), it featured Djabugay elder and

dance *marrdja* ('boss') Lance Riley's team of dancers (Henry 2000: 326). Only in 1996 was it moved to its current 25-acre location in nearby Cairns, the 'international gateway to Tropical North Queensland' and the Great Barrier Reef (Cairns Tourism). Today, it has received numerous state, national, and international awards for tourism excellence, is one of the most popular 'indigenous tourism' sites in the country, and is Australia's largest private employer of indigenous peoples (Indigenous Tourism Australia).

Similar to PCC, a typical day at Tjapukai is structured by scheduled cultural presentations, demonstrations and hands-on activities at various stations in the 'Aboriginal Camp.' Visitors learn to throw boomerangs and spears, participate in didgeridoo and bush medicine demonstrations, and witness traditional Aboriginal dance and fire-making in the Dance Theatre. Performers at the Aboriginal Camp and Dance Theatre, staffed exclusively by local indigenous peoples including the Djabugay and some Yalanji<sup>5</sup>, wear the traditional *lap laps*, straw skirts and ochre body paints of their precolonial ancestors. A majority of the visitor's experience at the park relies on direct interactions with the Aboriginal performers through these mediating activities.

In addition to the hands-on outdoor activities, the visitor may also enjoy multimedia displays in the Creation Theatre and the History Theatre. The Creation Theatre portrays Tjapukai cosmology through a combination of animation, holographic images, and live performance, all told in the Djabugay language (visitors receive the appropriate translation through provided headsets). The History Theatre is home to a short documentary featuring many Djabugay elders telling the 'story of what happened when the modern world descended upon a 40,000 year old culture' (*Tjapukai* 2001). It recounts the history of nineteenth century British colonization and 'depicts where the Aborigine stands today' (*Tjapukai* 2001). Between both multimedia presentations lies The Magic Space, a museum exhibit containing 'authentic stone age artefacts' as well as murals painted by Djabugay artists.

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<sup>5</sup> The Yalanji are another indigenous group from the Daintree area; many Djabugay and Yalanji have intermarried in postcolonial years and many Aborigines of this area identify with both groups (Henry 2000: 326).

In 2004, Tjapukai by Night was introduced as a new form of evening entertainment. Like the luau and Horizons show at PCC, Tjapukai by Night offers visitors a chance to ‘see, hear and taste the culture of the People of the Rainforest’ (Tjapukai 2007b). The Tjapukai website provides perhaps the best visually stimulating description of the event:

Thunder and lightening herald the Gadjia, a Dreamtime spirit in glowing, UV fibre-optic costume. A good spirit, he tells of the past. Suddenly, his opposite appears from nowhere - the Quinkan towers 6 metres above the audience, bidding them to enter the past.

After, the audience is handed tapsticks and asked to join the Tjapukai lakeside, where they become part of an ancient corroboree ritual which climaxes in the ceremonial making of a fire.

The Tjapukai hurl the fire spear across the lake where it contacts with the ancient tribal lands to become a mushrooming fireball, illuminating the lakeside and the audience.

A canoe appears, guided by Tjapukai carrying flaming torches. The dancers from the corroboree guide the canoe and its people to the shore. Here, they bid the audience to follow their light, as their flame torches magically create a pathway from the darkness up into the glowing restaurant overlooking the Caravonica Lakes.

After this elaborately staged, pyrotechnical feast for the senses, visitors are directed to the restaurant to enjoy a buffet dinner that features regional food and wines and a final, culminating dance performance.

The Polynesian Cultural Center and Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park offer strikingly similar experiences for the tourist. If authenticity and difference is indeed what tourists seek upon their travels, the large numbers of annual visitors to both PCC and Tjapukai suggest that both ventures effectively sell their product of the ‘authentic indigenous experience.’ In order to better understand what renders these cultural centres particularly appealing to the tourist, a deeper examination of the ways in which authenticity is created, rendered, and presented at these sites is vital.

## CREATING AUTHENTICITY AT PCC AND TJAPUKAI

One of the most striking and obvious characteristics of PCC and Tjapukai in creating ‘authentic’ representations is their use of ‘real natives’ for cultural presentations. While visitors might purchase tickets at the box office or souvenirs at the gift shop from white attendants, the performers within each park are identifiably ‘native.’ In her discussion of Hawaiian luaus, Desmond (1999) describes this accepted ‘native’ look in popular tourist performances as predominantly *hapa-haole* (half Caucasian, half Hawaiian/Asian):

Given the complexities of genealogical history in the islands, many of the dancers may actually have little if any Native Hawaiian ancestry. They may be predominantly Filipino, or Portuguese-Chinese, for example. But it is important that when seen through the racialized lens of the white mainlander’s perception, they appear to be Hawaiian. [24]

Thus, the performing brown body functions as the first sign of authenticity to the tourist, regardless of the actual tribal affiliation—in the Tjapukai example—or specific Polynesian background. From the most superficial perspective, if a brown, ‘native’ body professes to demonstrate the cultural practices of ‘his people,’ what authority does the white spectator have to question him? In this sense, the brown body becomes a sign to the tourist not only of indigeneity, but of its status as insider.

This sign of brown body=native=insider (and, conversely, white body=tourist=outsider), is aided by what Hall (2006) calls ‘back story.’ In his discussion of Disney’s Animal Kingdom at the Epcot Center in Florida, cultural representatives in their African exhibit ‘are “on loan” from their countries, and their authentic biographies provide “trace” for the installations they introduce and interpret’ (95). Such back stories exist in various forms at both PCC and Tjapukai to augment the implied authenticity of the performing brown body. At PCC, a common back story shared by many performers is that of ‘Polynesian student,’ whose employment at PCC directly supports their education at the adjacent university. PCC brochures distributed to visitors at the park describe this back story as such: ‘After completing their education, many return to their native islands to provide needed services and skills. By visiting the center, you contribute to their dream’ (PCC 2007a). Likewise, Tjapukai performers are ‘The People of the Rainforest’

who not only live in the area, but have been ‘rehearsing for 40,000 years to showcase our culture to you’ (*Tjapukai* 2007a). These back stories lend credence to each site’s claims of authenticity.

While the presence of ‘real natives’ with believable biographies certainly produces initial impressions of authenticity, it is the content presented at each site that is of primary importance. Both PCC and Tjapukai take great care to mention the ‘authorities’ that assist in the creation of their cultural displays. The *Tjapukai Sales Reference Guide* (2007b), available to tourists and travel agents alike through their website, proudly states:

We are 100% culturally authentic. Our park is the only authorized presentation of our culture in the entire region—Tjapukai elders have overseen and authorized all the product content of our park.

Similarly, significant attention is put into ensuring the accuracy and authenticity at PCC by a team of scholars from BYUH’s Institute for Polynesian Studies. Chiefs preside over each island village, many of whom are community leaders, ‘real chiefs and talking chiefs from the islands exercising full chiefly privileges both within the Laie community and back home’ (Ross 1994: 44). Their cooperation and collaboration implies that PCC and Tjapukai are presenting authentic ‘indigenous culture’ and possess the authority with which they can present this cultural information.

Finally, Hall (2006) argues that museum artefacts can also serve as a powerful way to ‘reinject realness’ into such simulated cultural environments. The constructed environments of these sites are not, in and of themselves, expected to convince visitors that they are experiencing a ‘real’ indigenous camp or village. Instead, ‘part of the pleasure lies in the awareness of the artifice—an admiration for the skill of the animator in creating the simulation’ (83; see also Hannigan 1998). What ‘anchors’ the simulated environment in reality is the presence of ‘authentic objects’—real, historical artefacts, encased behind glass—to create a ‘museum effect.’ Indeed, Tjapukai’s Magic Space and PCC’s Migrations Museum both house ‘authentic artefacts’ and play an important role in adding a more factual, educational perspective to the day’s performance-based entertainment.



## **TOURISM THEORY REVISITED – STAGED AUTHENTICITY**

Ultimately, these examples demonstrate that PCC and Tjapukai deliberately and consciously employ methods to convey notions of authenticity to its tourist audience. ‘Real natives’ parade the grounds, offering nuggets of cultural authenticity through their performing bodies. Approval by cultural ‘experts’ and the presence of historical artefacts are advertised on marketing materials, thereby verifying the cultural material presented in each park as authentic. As discussed previously in this paper, this notion of authenticity is crucial in defining the tourist’s experience. To MacCannell’s modern tourist, what is the point in gazing upon difference if it does not offer an ‘authentic’ reality in contrast to his own?

Postmodern analysis, however, has shown that authenticity is a tenuous reality at best. Who defines what is—and is not—authentic? Authentic for whom? MacCannell (1973, 1976) coined the phrase ‘staged authenticity’ to describe what is actually delivered to tourists seeking this irretrievable ideal of ‘authentic culture.’ Adopting Goffman’s (1959) concept of front and back regions in daily life, MacCannell (1973) considers the front region, that which is planned and performed, as providing a ‘staged authenticity’ that hides the inner workings of the production in the back region. An Italian restaurant, for example, might present ‘authentic’ dishes in a dining room decorated to signify ‘traditional Italy,’ whilst hiding the melee of the kitchen—and its non-Italian cooks—in the back. The primary difficulty for tourists, then, is deciphering what is truly authentic and what has been staged:

Touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experiences, and the tourist may believe that he is moving in this direction, but often it is very difficult to know for sure if the experience is in fact authentic. It is always possible that what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation. [1976: 101]

To carry on with this example, those lucky few who may be seated near or even within the kitchen, while enjoying feelings of intimacy by witnessing the ‘inner workings’ of a ‘real Italian kitchen,’ are actually being presented with a staged back region that may indeed be as false and constructed as what is presented in the front (99). This ‘staged intimacy... allows adults to recapture virginal sensations of discovery, or childlike

feelings of being half-in and half-out society, their faces pressed up against the glass’ (99).

While these staged front and back regions might have the desired effect for the ignorant tourist, these constructed spaces have profound effects on the tourist’s subject. In order to cope with an influx of tourists seeking to infiltrate their back regions, ‘those being gazed upon come to construct artificial sites which keep the inquisitive tourist away’ (Urry 1995: 139). Certainly, both Tjapukai and PCC are constructed, artificial sites. This artificiality, however, also emerges in the cultural presentations themselves. Indeed, Graburn (1983) has gone so far to call PCC one of “‘the most superficial” of cultural presentations in the Pacific (77; quoted in Webb 1994: 60). Criticized not only for their mass commercial appeal—as, to many critics, commercial success necessarily indicates no less than a prostitution of culture and thus inauthenticity—Tjapukai and PCC are lambasted particularly for failing to situate their presentations in any specific time period.

PCC is considered especially guilty of this. While the History Theatre at Tjapukai explicitly provides some historical context within which to place the cultural presentations at its park, PCC offers little in the way of this. Instead, as Ross (1994) states, ‘the time period represented in the villages is assumed to be precontact, although the traditional cultures are presented as if they were timeless, continuous with the past and present’ (44). Like many critiques of museum representations and written ethnographies, as illuminated during the crisis of representation in the 1980s within the social sciences (see Clifford & Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983; Said 1978), these sites place the indigenous cultures of Polynesia and Australia in a nebulous ethnographic present that refuses to acknowledge the contemporary situation of indigenous Polynesians and Australians. In many of the scripted performances at both sites during staged presentations, the performers tend to speak in the ethnographic present—which can be as much a statement of cultural continuity as it is a retreat to traditional methods of discussing the Other. Further compounding the problem at PCC, Ross continues, is the failure ‘to disabuse tourists of the idea that the villages represent existing lifeways today on islands that most will never visit.’ (44-45). While tourists might encounter different

indigenous realities on the streets of Cairns or Waikiki, the six other Polynesian nations represented at PCC do not have the same advantage.

Another way in which staged authenticity emerges at these sites is through the identity of the performers themselves. Through Hall (1994), I have already demonstrated that the presence of brown 'Polynesian' or 'Aboriginal' bodies and their back stories are used to add a 'cachet of "authenticity"' to their cultural presentations, whether those brown bodies are specifically Hawaiian, Tongan, Djabugay, and so on. This 'generic' brown body is also inherently problematic as these performers adopt 'faux identities' to authenticate their performances (Ross 1994: 51), particularly when many of them do not initially possess the cultural knowledge necessary to effectively perform their roles. To return to Disney's Animal Kingdom, Hall (1994) describes Thembi, a young African woman who served as the cultural representative on the hippo display, as 'a university student from the industrial hinterland of Johannesburg who had not been familiar with the ways of animals before she arrived in Florida for a vacation job' (95). Despite her evident lack of knowledge upon hiring her, her heritage and black skin nevertheless added authenticity to their African-based exhibit.

Similarly, many PCC performers go through rigorous training to qualify as effective cultural representatives (Ross 1994; see also PCC website), and then may be expected to represent other island nations as needed. On any given day, visitors might find 'Tongans playing the part of Marquesans, because of the shortage of Marquesan students, Samoans playing Hawaiians just for the hell of it, and Filipinos playing the role of Polynesians in the night show, because sometimes any brown body will do on stage' (Ross 1994: 51). Certainly, this is not communicated to the tourists themselves, as the performers are intended to serve simply as 'signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be', regardless of their actual island ancestry (Desmond 1999: xx). At Tjapukai, there is a fear that 'other Aboriginal people, more ready and able to perform with the speech style and bodily demeanour considered by the management as being attractive to tourists, will slowly and insidiously replace Djabugay people' (Henry 2000: 328). In essence, in order to achieve some credible level of authenticity, cultural centres like PCC

and Tjapukai must merely present that which tourists interpret as ‘indigenous,’ be that pan-Asian-*haole* ‘Polynesians’ or dark-skinned ‘Aborigines,’ Djabugay or not.

The examples at Tjapukai and PCC demonstrate Rojek and Urry’s (1997) view that ‘all cultures [and their presentations] are inauthentic and contrived... [and] get remade as a result of the flows of peoples, objects and images across national borders, whether these involve colonialism, work-based migration, individual travel or mass tourism’ (11; see also Appadurai 1991). As part of today’s increasingly globalized world, all cultures ‘continually invent and reinvent themselves’ through an endless process of emergence and adaptation to global processes (Bruner 1994: 407). Thus, as there is no fixed culture to which authenticity—or, necessarily, identity—can be assigned, the tourist’s quest to witness and experience ‘authentic culture’ not only remains unsuccessful, but is ultimately impossible. From the subject’s perspective, however, the imperialistic relationships inherent in these encounters can be resisted or even rejected through the conscious creation and staging of ‘authentic culture.’

This implies, however, that these native groups have the infrastructure or power to consciously create these staged authenticities. Instead, in what is perhaps the most pessimistic view toward mass tourism, Boorstin (1961) claims that these groups are more typically confined to operating within the whims of the tourism market. Paraphrasing Boorstin, Urry (2002[1990]) states,

Isolated from the host environment and the local people, the mass tourist travels in guided groups and finds pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying “pseudo-events” and disregarding the “real” world outside. As a result, tourist entrepreneurs and the indigenous populations are induced to produce ever more extravagant displays for the gullible observer who is thereby further removed from the local people. Over time, via advertising and the media, the images generated of different tourist gazes come to constitute a closed self-perpetuating system of illusions which provide the tourist with the basis for selecting and evaluating potential places to visit. [7]

By surreptitiously creating a version of ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ that tourists expect and calling it an authentic rendition of native culture, these encounters instead become an ‘expression of crass commercialism, and of a double deception in which a falsified reality is made to confirm and satisfy the false expectations engendered by images of the

destination in the promotional brochures and advertisements' (Cohen 1995: 17). Thus, both groups lose: not only does the mass tourist lack the discernment required to understand that what he sees is staged, contrived, and ultimately inauthentic, but the native populations that serve them are forced to manufacture cultural displays that adhere to the tourist's preconceptions of what constitutes native identity.

To borrow Cohen's (1995) term, the 'contrived' attraction of tourist cultural centres, clearly staged for the tourist's benefit, provides an interesting point of departure from which to examine these theories. It is evident that PCC and Tjapukai remain fully situated within these cyclical processes of (in)authenticity and cultural reproduction, a process that Balme (1998) defines as 'negotiable authenticity.' However, this negotiable authenticity is not necessarily the destructive force many scholars claim it to be. As PCC and Tjapukai rely most heavily on performance in their cultural demonstrations, theories of cultural resistance and emergence through performance and the body are particularly relevant to this discussion. A closer examination of these theories and their relevance to PCC and Tjapukai can reveal the important processes by which native performers create and construct a sense of contemporary indigenous identity at these sites.

### **PERFORMANCE AND THE BODY**

The performing bodies at PCC and Tjapukai provide the foundation upon which these tourist centres are based. From dance performances to demonstrations to the costumed and painted bodies themselves, each employee on the grounds of these sites can be considered a performing body. This distinction is deliberate. Tourists are drawn to the interactive and entertainment nature of such cultural centres; indeed, even museums, that bastion of colonial encounters, have begun incorporating more performative aspects into their praxis (West 2000; Peers & Brown 2003). The central component of such performative spaces is the body itself. At tourist sites, the bodies of tourism employees are on display and 'thus embody the culturally meaningful tourism product, and can act as exemplars of the bodily habitus expected of and desired by tourists' (Crang 1997: 151). Indeed, it is through the 'rhetorical, visual, and verbal structures of the performance' that these native bodies are deemed authentic and 'nativized' (Desmond

1997: 84-85). Part of what activates this ‘nativizing’ function of dance performance is the objectifying gaze of the tourist. Urry (2002) writes, ‘Tourism is often about the body-as-seen, displaying, performing and seducing visitors with skill, charm, strength, sexuality and so on.... The moving body is often what gets gazed upon, as a “spectacular corporeality” increasingly characterising global tourism.’ (156). It is this objectification by the tourist that creates much of the ‘authenticity’ and meaning of these tourist performances. Essentially, then, the performers are stuck in a cycle of objectification that forces them to perform in ways that satisfy the tourist’s perceptions of what constitutes ‘authentic,’ ‘native’ dance and performance. It is this cycle of objectification and pandering to tourists interests that garners the most criticism of such commercially successful ventures as PCC and Tjapukai.

However, many dance scholars consider performances to function in a means beyond simple objectification and authentication. While acknowledging that performance dynamics can be caught up in hegemonic modes of objectification, scholars like Henry (2000), Savigliano (1995), and Martin (1990) maintain that public performances have the capacity to trigger more meaningful exchanges between the audience and the subject of their gaze. Dance, as a ‘form of corporeal politics... embodies social agency [and] provides a bodily means of connection with others in/through times and space’ (Henry 2000: 322). This bodily connection is found in dance performances at PCC and Tjapukai, upon which both sites rely heavily, as well as other forms of performance, be it a fire-making demonstration, a drumming presentation, or in the everyday interactions between ‘native’ and ‘tourist.’ Performing bodies are seen as the primary agent by which ‘authenticity,’ ‘culture,’ and, ultimately, ‘native identity’ can be constructed and understood—both by the performers creating these presentations *and* by the tourists that watch them.

This is not to say that the negative processes of objectification and essentialism through performance do not occur at PCC and Tjapukai. However, the dancing body also has the potential to serve as a means to ‘experience, enact, and embody political activity’ as an agent of resistance (Martin 1990: 9). Dance and performance, particularly in an indigenous context, have important historical implications that reveal the potential of the

body as an agentive force. Reed (1998) states, 'The suppression, prohibition and regulation of indigenous dances under colonial rule is an index of the significance of dance as a site of considerable political and moral anxiety. Colonial administrations often perceived indigenous dance practices as both a political and moral threat to colonial regimes' (506). In New Zealand and Hawaii,

the preservation, and to some degree re-creation, of performance culture towards the end of the nineteenth century were crucial for cultural survival in the face of heavy pressures to assimilate. Both were involved in the invention and redefinition of performance traditions that fulfilled the double function of presenting an image of cultural vitality to the colonial gaze and finding updated functions for performance within a new cultural situation. [Balme 1998: 64]

After being outlawed, their resurgence signaled a resistance—albeit a relatively contemporary one—to complete assimilation of western ideals. Similar models of colonial suppression of dance and performance practices can be found across Australia and Polynesia, and thus remain particularly relevant to our discussion of performance in the Australian and Hawaiian contexts.

Of course, the contemporary counterpart of such colonial regimes is westernization and its pervasive sales agent: tourism. Thus, contemporary performance can provide not only a 'public statement of the continuity of cultural transmission' (Henry 2000: 326), but it also has the potential to become an embodied resistance to the particular historical, political and social conditions that suppressed it in the first place.

If, through performance, the 'native' body becomes a force by which historical, political, and social constructions can simultaneously be created and challenged, it is the dynamic between the spectator and the performer that is of primary importance. This spectator-performer relationship is embedded in the daily presentations at Tjapukai and PCC, as visitors video the Aboriginal 'shake-a-leg' dances, take photographs of the Samoan tree climbers, and watch in awe at the fierce Maori *haka*. Indeed, the reactions to and participation in these activities by the spectators are what form the basis of this cultural resistance: these performances possess the 'evocative power to entice, involve and take captive the nonindigenous spectators in a poetics of responsive action,' (Magowan 2000: 320). Each performance, however, is 'framed on the one hand by those

who conceive of it and on the other by those who consume it' (Martin 1990: 82); thus, any political message embodied in these performances—deliberate or not—can only be perceived as such if a spectator is present to translate its meaning.

The way in which this spectator-performer dynamic is activated at tourist sites like Tjapukai and PCC is through the tourist gaze. According to Urry (2002), 'It is the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are the relevant differences and what is "other"' (145). While certain activities at these sites may be embodied—the PCC's 'Go Native' campaign that 'lets you throw Tongan spears, prepare Tahitian coconut bread, train with Samoan fireknife practice batons, learn exciting Polynesian dances and more' (PCC 2007a) being a prime example of this—the tourist's experience remains primarily visual. Video footage and photographs are captured as visual evidence that tourists were 'there,' as proof positive that they were successful on their quest to collect 'signs' of other cultures and places (see Urry 1995, 2002). While this gaze is demonstrably one of objectification and a seemingly voyeuristic fascination with—and creation of—the Other, the gaze is also an exchange. Crang (1997) writes that tourism employees

are not just passive recipients of tourist gazes. They actively respond to them. They may hide from them (finding or constructing places shielded from the gazes); they may masquerade within them (using gazes to facilitate the development of one or more personae); and they may pose through them (using the gaze to send a message). [151]

Essentially, while the gaze might initially turn tourist performances into spectacle, the deliberate and carefully constructed responses by performers to this gaze transform the tourist cultural centre into a site for dialogue and exchange.

The responses to this tourist gaze and the agentive qualities of performance at Tjapukai and PCC are varied. At Tjapukai, the primary site for creating resistance to and through the gaze is the Dance Theatre. At the opening of the performance, as visitors are seated before an empty stage, an indigenous voice comes over the loudspeaker. After welcoming visitors to the park, he states, 'Today you'll see dances passed down to us from our ancestors, and dances we have created in their memories.' The brevity of this



comment belies its importance in creating meaning in the performance; through his statement, this performer establishes the dance theatre as a celebration of ‘Djabugay continuity as the collective memory of embodied relationship to ancestors and country’ (Henry 2000: 328). In this way, performances are ‘not just for tourists but are potentially commemorative ceremonies’ (Henry 2000: 328) that serve a commercial function as well as one more profound. Of course, whether these dances are sincerely performed with this greater meaning is irrelevant; instead, the importance is that *tourists* understand and believe this. Through the objectifying gaze of the tourist audience, Tjapukai dancers stake a claim to their cultural continuity. By embracing this gaze do they resist it and communicate through it.

Additionally, more explicit modes of resistance are at play in the final song Tjapukai dancers play at the end of every performance. Entitled ‘Proud to Be Aborigine,’ the lyrics tell a story of colonization, cultural change, and reconciliation:

50,000 years we lived in peace  
A land a man was free to wander  
50,000 years in the spirit of Dreamtime  
The white man came, and pulled it down under...

I learn from you, you learn from me  
We can’t afford another blunder.  
Together we can live in harmony  
Be as brothers in the land Down Under.

Proud to be Aborigine  
We’ll never die, Tjapukai  
Proud to be Aborigine  
Always be our identity  
Proud to be Aborigine.

While the song might present a whitewashed version of the history of Australian colonization and contemporary indigenous struggles, it nevertheless places the dance performance, as well as the entire day’s experience at Tjapukai, in a broader historical and cultural context. Through the lyrics, the gazing tourist can understand that, as much as the centre is meant to provide entertainment, it also functions as a medium through which contemporary Aboriginal peoples and western tourists can interact in positive and meaningful ways. Thus, while Tjapukai serves as a site for the ‘embodiment of

hegemony,' it also allows a space for Aboriginal people to express social agency and redefine themselves through performance (Henry 2000: 331), a process which Myers (2006) refers to as a 'field of cultural production' (504).

PCC performers, conversely, appear to offer a more complex engagement with this tourist gaze. This is partially due to the fact that the concept of performance is much more varied than at Tjapukai. It operates on a significantly larger scale, both in number of annual visitors as well as variety of attractions. While some offer more traditional performance models—dancers, drummers, or musicians displaying their talents before a seated audience—performance also occurs in scripted demonstrations of material culture and daily practices like cooking, weaving, and so on. Both Balme (1998) and Ross (1994) cite the Samoan village in particular as offering the most explicit forms of performance resistance at the park. During a cooking demonstration, Sielu Avea—the resident Samoan 'villager' and 'real Samoan chief' (Balme 1998: 58)—delivers a monologue to tourists in 'a classic example of staged ex-primitivism' (Ross 1994: 47).<sup>6</sup> Though superficially the performance appears to provide the essentialized stereotypes that Samoans are happy people who make fire by rubbing two sticks together and eat coconut, a deeper reading of Sielu's presentation reveals 'relatively politicized comments about modernization, gendered division of labor, skin privilege, and touristic colonialism' (Ross 1994: 48). Through humor, Sielu employs strategies of resistance against the tourist gaze. Balme considers this resistance especially striking in Sielu's jokes about choosing the right coconut: by stating that the coconut 'will turn brown when it is ripe, like me, which tells me that some of you are not ripe,' Sielu may actually be referring 'specifically to the European discussion of skin-color hierarchies and more generally to what may be termed the theatricalization of Polynesian peoples' (60). Balme calls this a form of 'colonial mimicry' that, rather than 'imitating the colonizer and developing forms of subversion by holding up a distorted image of the European,' Sielu instead appears to be 'mimicking European projections of themselves' (60).

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix for a transcript of this monologue.

On a considerably smaller, though no less important, level, this process of cultural production through reactions and resistance to the tourist gaze occurs daily at both sites through the informal conversations that such encounters encourage. Within the close quarters created by hands-on demonstrations and activities, tourists and performers alike can engage in more in-depth conversations than more strict performance models allow. Outside the script, Tjapukai and Polynesian performers have more freedom to create more meaningful exchanges than those typically garnered by the objectifying gaze. With the rapt attention of the tourist gaze in hand, and the ‘authenticity’ with which it bestows on its subject, the indigenous performer can use this exchange as a vehicle to communicate relevant messages of contemporary indigeneity—in contrast to the more accepted modes of ‘traditional’, precolonial ‘culture’—to his audience. Whether tourists and performers alike take advantage of these opportunities is another matter; what is important, however, is that the potential for such encounters exists.

Similarly, issues of cultural production and resistance through performance can arise simply in the spatial composition of the sites. Members of each site’s administration, most of which are white, are located in buildings adjacent to, but separate from, the grounds, giving the Aboriginal or Polynesian performers some varying levels of autonomy. Indeed, in my conversations with performers at Tjapukai, they acknowledged the disparity between the performers ‘down here’ and the administrators ‘up there.’ While they might hold the money and dictate their expectations of performances, it is those people on the grounds that negotiate the ways in which the administrative vision is realized. At PCC, the villages themselves can serve as locations of subtle resistance ‘against the official PCC philosophy of staged traditionalism’ due to the ‘certain degree of autonomy [each village has] in the staging of these presentations’ (Balme 1998: 59). The chiefs that oversee each village, many of whom are chiefs back home or respected cultural leaders, have more control over the presentations that occur on the grounds simply because the administrators that enforce the staged presentations are not there.

## CULTURAL OWNERSHIP AND AUTHORIZATION

As the previous section demonstrates, performances at Tjapukai and PCC have the potential to resist and create new notions of indigeneity through the tourist gaze. Not simply the passive recipients of the gaze, these performers are engaged in a visual and verbal dialogue that can convey much more than objectified, essentialized versions of complex Polynesian and Aboriginal identities. However, the piece of the puzzle missing in this analysis is the subject of ownership and authority within these sites. While the brown dancing body is challenging preconceived notions of its identity with every movement, to what—or whom—is this body in resistance? Is it simply engaged in a politics of resistance against those tourists who watch and objectify it? To the larger tourism industry, or perhaps westernization as a whole? Or, perhaps more locally, is the body resisting the representations forced upon it by the administration of the cultural centres themselves?

Of course, depending on the performer, it can be all or nothing of these things. But importantly, it reveals important dynamics within the centres that help inform this discussion on the value and potential of tourist cultural centres in constructing contemporary indigenous identity.

The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park might be considered a model for indigenous ownership of and involvement in tourist attractions. Upon opening its doors in Kuranda in 1987, Tjapukai Dance Theatre (as it was then called) was a collaboration between a Djabugay dance troupe and a Canadian-American couple with experience in theatre management. Today, the company remains a privately-owned business that has brought in over AUD\$25 million to the Aboriginal community. The Djabugay and Irukandji communities are majority shareholders in the venture. Though debate occasionally flares between the park administration and Djabugay members over issues of representation and authenticity, Tjapukai administration seek to address many of these issues by employing elders from these communities to oversee and authorize the material presented in the park. While this method may not address issues of authority and representation in the tribal councils themselves, nor the age-old tensions between

management and employees, it represents a step forward in allowing indigenous voices to determine the ways in which their culture and identity are represented at Tjapukai on an administrative level.

The Polynesian Cultural Center, on the other hand, presents far more complex issues over ownership and authority, particularly due to its founding by the Mormon church and its affiliation with Brigham Young University Hawaii. As a Mormon establishment, everything from the detailing of costumes to which cultural practices are portrayed must conform to specific church standards. As one villager notes,

Because of the church standards and the church beliefs, we can only show so much of the culture. We cannot show the things that would conflict with the church, such things as 'black magic' that they did, even a lot of the costumes that they wear have to conform to church standards as much as possible... Sometimes it's not as close as it should be because of the restrictions that the church has on it. And at that point the culture kind of takes a back seat to the way of the church. [Webb 1994: 67-68]

Certainly within any discussion of authenticity, its lack or indeed impossibility thereof, the religious affiliations of PCC should play a major role. In an effort to 'preserve and portray the cultures, arts and crafts of Polynesia,' as stated by PCC's mission statement, its Mormon administration is creating a version of Polynesian history and culture that corresponds to its very distinct religious worldview. Though PCC contains a Mission house, advertises its connection to BYUH in promotional materials, and provides a lengthy background of Mormonism and its connection to Polynesia on its website, curiously, many tourists who visit PCC do not always realize the connection between PCC and Mormonism.

PCC as a reflection of Mormon ideals highlights the ways in which these types of cultural centres reflect the dominant cultures that create them. This concept is discussed primarily with the museum institution, though it certainly applies to this discussion. Like classic museum representations, tourist centres have a tendency to portray 'Polynesian' and 'Aboriginal' cultures as fairly homogeneous, substituting one brown body for another when necessary (see Hill 2000; Doxtator 1985). Both museums and tourist centres tend to gravitate toward sweeping proclamations that root these institutions in a salvage paradigm: PCC was founded as a means to avoid the 'erosion of traditional island

cultures' (PCC) (though the missionary work of the Mormon church certainly contributed to this process); Tjapukai applauds itself for 'the cultural revival brought about by the company's success [which] has resulted in economic prosperity throughout our community' (Tjapukai 2007b). Equally, however, can tourist centres function, like museums, as a contact zone.

### TOURIST CENTRES AS CONTACT ZONES

Pratt (1992) first introduced the concept of 'contact zone,' while Clifford (1997) applied her theory to museum representations. A contact zone is defined as 'the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations,' informed by and constituted within relations between the colonizer and the colonized (Pratt 1992: 6). Within the museum context, this contact zone becomes a 'power-charged set of exchanges' (Clifford 1997), the result of which creates, as Tilley (1999) states, 'competing, changing and emerging identities... wherever ethnicity and tradition are placed on display and become the focus of attention' (245). Within tourism centres, these kinds of exchanges occur in the daily negotiations of power, authority, and authenticity through performance. Within the contact zone of a tourist centre, the colonized Other are in constant contact with the western, colonizing tourist and engaged in an endless performative dialogue of resistance and cultural production.

What is clear in this analysis is that significant tensions exist between administration and performers, performers and tourists, and the performative space of each cultural centre and the larger expectations of mass tourism. More than issues of authenticity or commercialism, what is revealed in these dynamics are issues of power and authority: who has the authority to claim that representations of 'culture'—be it Australian, Polynesian or otherwise—are authentic or not? These questions are difficult to answer. However, as Myers (2006) states,

A focus on the political economy and the social relationship of producing culture, rather than the critical analysis of representations, not only allows for recognition of the possibility of agency (within limits) on the part of the various participants but also engages the rather complex intersections and reorganizations of interest that are inevitable involved in any production of culture. [506]

These ‘complex intersections’ of interest, as demonstrated in this paper, include those tourists who seek to find ‘authentic culture,’ those park administrators who attempt to meet these tourists’ expectations under the guise of producing ‘authentic’ representations of culture, and those performers expected to deliver it.

These varying interests that lie in tension with one another, however, are not always black and white. In his examination of tourist villages in Vanuatu, Tilley (1999) states, ‘The interactions between tourists and indigenous groups are seldom simply reducible to various forms of self-interested mutual exploitation, manipulation, marketing strategies and trivialized, objectified and commodified experiences’ (247). What is clear in both these sites is that the performers are playing on this idealized version of their ‘primitivity’ to produce ‘an inauthentic postmodern pastiche... in which populations pretend to be pre-modern in order to continue to purchase their modernist identity spaces in a world of mass movement, mass production and mass consumption’ (Tilley 1999: 246). To function within a modern, globalized world, these performers use their bodies within the contact zone of the tourist centre to negotiate, transform and reproduce contemporary indigenous identities.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

As tourist cultural sites continue to grow in popularity, it is vital to examine their potential as a site of cultural production for source communities. Though its many problems are outlined in this study, including negative tourist impact through objectification and the gaze, issues of authority and negotiable- and staged authenticities, the tourism cultural attraction possesses unique benefits. These centres channel tourists into a single site for minimal impact on the local community, inspire local involvement through resident discounts and special community events, and can stimulate indigenous interest in cultural practice as a direct result of its popularity amongst outsiders. The centres themselves may offer a new means of exposure to performers who otherwise might not experience their cultural heritage in other ways. As Stanton (1989) remarks of PCC,

Many students who previously had little direct contact with their cultural heritage now have their ethnic identity reinforced through their association with the

Center... especially for students from New Zealand, French Polynesia, and Hawaii, as well as for migrant families from such areas as Samoa and Tonga whose children have little opportunity for enculturation within their original ethnic group. [260]

Additionally, the PCC-BYU International Work Experience Scholarship program has assisted over 15,000 BYUH students in graduating debt-free from an American university (PCC). The tremendous financial returns of Tjapukai have generated significant attention to the Djabugay community and place it within ‘a very positive public identity category’ in Australia (Henry 2000: 328).

Within the paradoxical ‘authentic’ worlds of commercial tourism, tourist centres offer significant potential for local indigenous communities to not only resist dominant versions of their history but to create new histories and versions of contemporary ‘living’ cultures. Through performance, tourist cultural centres function as contact zones between indigenous source communities and western tourists, where contemporary indigenous identities can be negotiated and presented. Through methods of resistance, these brown performing bodies operate within a fetishizing, objectifying framework in order to challenge accepted western notions of indigeneity. While these reconstructions may not occur within the upper echelons of administrative bureaucracy—which struggle in their own ways for authority in representation—there is potential for these sites to function in this way from the ground level, beginning with the performers, their ‘scripted’ performances, and the informal conversations that occur in the interstices between staged performances. Despite their significant shortcomings, tourist cultural centres like the Polynesian Cultural Center and the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park nevertheless offer the Djabugay and Polynesian communities a site for cultural production.



## **APPENDIX**

## MAP 1: OAHU, HAWAII



The Polynesian Cultural Center in Laie is approximately one hour's drive from Waikiki, the tourist hub within Hawaii's capital city of Honolulu.

## MAP 2: QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA



**The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park is located in the northernmost district of Cairns, just south of the Daintree National Rainforest along the Great Barrier Reef.**

## POLYNESIAN CULTURAL CENTER: SAMOAN MONOLOGUE

The following is a transcription of Sielu Avea's monologue in the Island of Samoa village at the Polynesian Cultural Center, reprinted here from Balme 1998: 59-60:

We are happy to have you all here. There is so much to do and learn today. At the center we have seven different languages, so we don't understand each other. That's why we have to speak English. *[laughter]* Any questions, talk to me. All of us that work here are from Samoa. The culture of Samoa is strong because Samoa is still controlled by chiefs. So the chiefs make the rules and they tell you what to do. Whatever they say we do it, so it's good to be chief *[laughter]*. People of Samoa are known as the happy people of Polynesia: ladies and gentlemen we are the happy people. *[looks sad]* Please be happy. Are you happy? *[audience: 'Yeah!!']* Me, too. *[looks sad]* [...] Every time we cook, we use the ground-oven. When I go back some day, I'm going to take a microwave oven. Allow me to share with you one of the most important parts of cooking: making fire. You can make fire by rubbing two sticks together. While you flick your Bic, we rub our sticks. It's very simple: it takes about five and a half hours. *[demonstrates; applause]* Do you want to see how we put it out? It's not what you're thinking. Any questions about making fire? You can do this anytime you want, because any wood works. Make sure the wood is dry and the two pieces come from the same tree. You know the name of this wood? Firewood. *[laughter]*

Sielu Avea's monologue continues, reprinted from Ross 1994: 47-48:

Seriously, folks, to cook we always use the coconut milk. This one is ripe, you can tell by its color, it always turns brown, it turns brown like me. This one is ripe, and it tells me that some of you are not ripe yet *[overzealous laughter]*. That's a joke. We also use this object. Now this is what we call mele'i. Say it. *[audience complies]* In English 'sharp stick'. Say it. *[audience says 'sharp stick']* We're gonna use the stick for husking the coconut. *[demonstrates in three steps]* I was doing that in slow motion for your convenience. In Samoa, this is one of the competitive sports among young men and women. Record for the men – three seconds; ladies – two days. If you let the ladies cook, we'd never eat, then we'd all go to McDonalds. Now we have to learn how to crack the coconuts. To crack it you have to start at the face—this line is the softest spot, which you have to hit with a hard object. You can use hammers, knives, screwdrivers, dynamite. In Samoa we use our foreheads. You don't believe it, do you? *[advances threateningly on audience member]* Close your eyes! A lady from Canada came here last week and told me that she put a coconut on the ground and ran it over with a lawnmower. A young man from Texas put on his .45 and shot the thing between the eyes, while his mother-in-law was holding the coconut. Please don't do that. In our islands, this is what we use, a rock—all you do is hit across the line—if it doesn't come out in two pieces please don't blame me. I am pure Samoan, this is Hawaiian coconut, made in Taiwan. *[successfully divides the coconut, macho styles, audience responds]* Thank you, believe it or not. That's the end of our demonstration, folks, if you have any questions, take them with you.

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